

# KIDS WITHOUT Our Voice

*the  
spare change  
magazine*

OUR  
CHILDREN'S  
FUTURE

**BROKEN PROMISES?**  
FIRST NATIONS SAY SLOW DOWN!

May 1997 Vol. 4 No. 5  
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**OUR VOICE** is published to provide an income opportunity for economically marginalized people in our society while communicating about their issues to the public.

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For advertising rates and information, please contact **OUR VOICE** at 421-7966, John in Edmonton and in Calgary call Carol at 230-4477.

**The VOICES**

# Themes that evolve our magazine

Some issues of this magazine just evolve... patterns come forward and the issue builds around them. This month two themes emerged. **Michael Walters** and photographer **Pieter de Vos**, whose picture of Chief Henry Holloway is on the cover, went to the First Nations' Day of Action and wanted to tell about it. Calgary assistant editor **LeAnn Brown** wrote a review on a book about native people fighting government one hundred years ago.

Not every child is born into a family with well-to-do parents. Many kids have to live without many of the things their classmates and friends take for granted. **Marilyn Clements** in Calgary reports on how parents make the most of programs for their children. **Michael Walters** also brought in the piece on young people "panhandling" on the street. Young people facing the future became another theme.

Our *Words on the Street* column for

## By donation only...

This magazine is for sale by donation and there is no fixed price. This is stated clearly on the cover. Unfortunately we have received a number of complaints recently from buyers who say they were pressured into giving more for the magazine than they offered.

The vendors usually do pay 60 cents for the magazine, and some people offer them only a quarter, or less, and sometimes vendors take a loss. That's a loss that is hard for them to take. It would make anyone upset. These cases are rare, though and they are no excuse to push other people for a higher price.

One bullying vendor does spoil the atmosphere for everyone. We appreciate receiving the complaints from people who show their concern by letting us know this is going on. Vendors who pull this type of thing are suspended or cut off, when we can track them down. We are doing our best to keep vendors courteous and polite and we ask our buyers to be patient if they occasionally encounter one who is not.

-K.W.

**MAY 1997 Vol. 4 No. 5**

**OUR VOICE** welcomes your contribution.

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# Our Voice

*the  
spare change  
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# May 1997

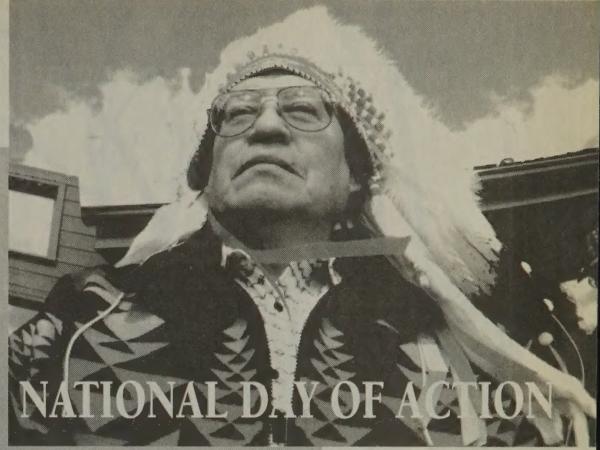
The people who bring  
you **OUR VOICE**

This publication exists because of the efforts of the people who sell it to you on the street, the vendors. For our vendors **OUR VOICE** is a job that helps them to be independent and self-employed. Each issue we highlight one of our vendors in Vendor Profile to let you know a little bit about the people who bring you **OUR VOICE**. ♦



*Our Voice*

12  
►



◀ OUR  
CHILDREN'S  
FUTURE

4-5  
6-7

14-15 ►

WORDS ON  
THE STREET

TALKING  
BACK  
*Your opinion.*  
*Our opinion:*  
10 & 11 ►



NEW BOOKS  
*Loyal till Death:  
Indians and the  
North-West  
Rebellion*

18 ►



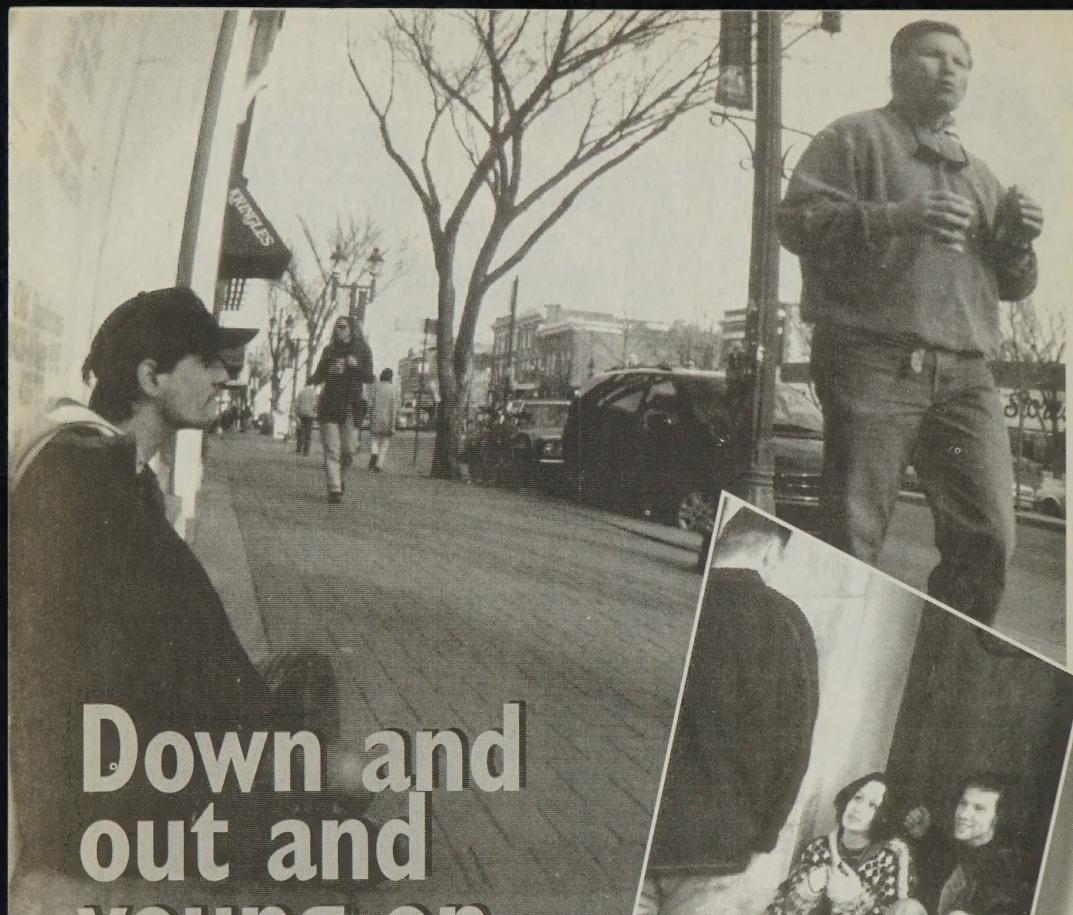
► 20 News of  
the World  
► 23 Cartoons

16 ►  
FROM OUR  
STORY  
CONTEST

The  
Doll  
Lady

POETRY

17 ►  
Our Vendor Profile  
22 ►  
The Crossword



# Down and out and young on Whyte

**"Panhandling" by young people is booming**

**Story and photos by Michael Walters**

**C**an you spare eleven cents?" It's his game. Ask for a little and you might end up with a lot. He sits cross legged in a door-way along one of Edmonton's busiest streets.

He estimates that a thousand people pass by his spot on nice summer weekends. People who are out for the art, the trends, the trinkets and the coffee. He asks them all. He doesn't judge whether or not they are rich or poor. He asks everyone.

"If I go out and look for a job, and don't get one, I've wast-

**OUR  
CHILDREN'S  
FUTURE**

ed my day. I don't make any money and I can't afford to eat or get a room for the night. I'm better off pannin' right now," says Dean, another young street kid, who has also become known as Whyte Avenue's senior panhandler.

Since the summer of 1994, the number of young people begging for money along Whyte has increased tremendously.

"When I came here in '93, I never saw anybody except the occasional older person pannin', but never any kids. Now I'd say there's up to forty or fifty kids who pan from time to time."

Many people might believe they are kids who are asking



for money though don't really need it. They are simply kids who have romanticized poverty and are taking advantage of people's generosity. They believe these are kids who can't get enough money from the parents they still live with to buy things like drugs and alcohol.

"I'd say that about fifty percent of the kids I meet on the street are the real deal. The others don't really need to be down here pannin'. They have somewhere to go, and parents, or relatives to feed them. They're just after money for dope, or just something to do."

Some of the kids may have certain issues like not being able to get along with their home life. They may be exercising some sort of rebellious spirit. Whyte Avenue is considered to be a good place to go. A good place to be free, and be accepted. Ultimately however, these kinds of kids have somewhere to go. They are not necessarily poor because they come from poor families.

But there are many other kids who do need the money they ask for. They are kid, who for a number of reasons have been forced from their homes. The most common scenario is that they encountered some form of abuse, and chose to leave the situation, or may have been forced to leave. The number of runaways is about on par with the number of youths who have been thrown out of their homes. They are young people with troubled pasts, and very few skills.

Sometimes they become trapped in trying to survive day-to-day. Sometimes they lose the ability, the confidence, or the motivation to look to the future.

Claire, who is eighteen, moved to Edmonton from Ottawa to live with her father. He had convinced her to come and live with him, but after a month she proved to be too much of an inconvenience for him, so she was told to leave. She had nowhere to go.

"I'm just trying to get enough money to get a place to live, or maybe to go back to Ottawa. I've been approached by quite a few people already to move downtown and start hooking, but I'd much rather panhandle."

"It's not a profession filled with a lot of self-esteem," says Dean. "I don't feel depressed, but I'm far from happy. I sure the hell don't want to be doing this forever."

Dean and some of the other street kids have picked up odd jobs from shop owners along Whyte Avenue. They sweep and wash windows, and in the winter there is never a shortage of snow to shovel.

"The shop owners are good. We never get any guff from them, and they help us out whenever they can by giving us work."

It is difficult to know which young person to give your spare change to while you walk down Whyte Avenue, sipping on a latte and shopping for candle holders, or perhaps it may make it more difficult to decide which kids to say no to.

"If I had a dime for every person who's said no to me, my grandkids would be rich," says Dean.

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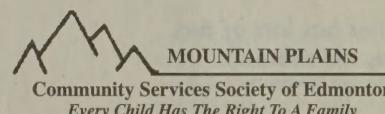
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# KIDS



**Ben Jones has lots of fun.  
Like any kid should.**  
Photos: Marilyn Clements



**Raising kids  
with little  
money**

**Giving them a full life**

**BY MARILYN CLEMENTS**

***Our Voice*** writer Marilyn Clements talked to parents who are raising children with very little income about how they provide extra activities and enrichment for their children.

**S**andi is a single parent of a twelve year-old boy. She works as a receptionist and receives partial social assistance. In eight years most of her jobs have lasted six months or less.

"Personally, the hardest thing about enrichment activities is having to say no because of lack of money to pay for the course and transportation on a weekly basis for a set period of time. Sometimes I don't have enough money for bus fares for two people to go back and forth for the duration of the program. My son has occasionally taken part in art lessons (pottery), swimming classes, and gymnastics when fees and transportation costs could be covered.

The Out-of-School program my son attends has been the main source of enrichment activities for him. My subsidized fees cover most of the activities available through the pro-

# WITHOUT OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE

gram. Occasionally I have to pay \$3 to \$5 dollars extra on certain activities, especially if transportation is included.

When the choices come down to food and shelter, the extra activities often lose out. Transportation has always been a problem for me. There are some activities that are just too awkward to get to on public transit. As for subsidy, the forms and documentation needed sometimes are complicated. As a low income family I find it demoralizing to always have to document my situation to some bureaucracy."

Lora is a single parent of one 14 year-old daughter. Lora says they have been living below the poverty level ever since her daughter was born. She works in education and childcare to support herself and daughter with occasional social assistance.

"My daughter has gone to The Calgary Children's Festival, Brownies, school sponsored activities, like swimming, outdoor school, theatre performances, volunteering at Parkmount Achievement Centre, serving dinner for the homeless, and Kids' Triathlon."

My daughter participates mostly in free stuff or through volunteering. I sometimes pay partial fees on school sponsored activities. We have had to do personal fund raising and get assistance from family when it was available."

"We don't do any out of town activities such as Calaway Park, or camping, as we have no car."

Costs of some extra programs for children can be offset through the Calgary Parks and Recreation fee assistance program. Families can apply twice a year for

discounted swim passes and for four enrichment programs per year, one per season.

To get fee assistance a person must register for a program first, then go in person to the program site bringing supporting documents regarding income. You have to pay a minimum of 10% of the total program fee.

"I've often wondered about music lessons," says Lora. "Are there any subsidies or programs for low income people?"

## When the choices come down to food and shelter, the extra activities often lose out.

"If society generally was aware of how important these activities are for children perhaps more would be available. Enrichment activities opens up other options for recreation, employment futures, and understanding the society in which one lives. Through my work in child care I have met many women who receive child care subsidy and don't want anyone to know. People are afraid to let anyone know they have a low income."

❖

## Calgary contacts for kids' activities

**Kids Sport** 221-4560 for fees or equipment for sports such as soccer, hockey, gymastics, baseball etc.

**Minor Hockey Association** of Calgary 245-5773. Each association (30 in Calgary) handles their own fee assistance program. The person registering a son or daughter must ask for fee assistance, and parents can also volunteer to offset costs. Costs for equipment can be reduced by exchange programs and second-hand purchases. Car pooling can also help with transportation costs.

**CUPS** (Calgary Urban Projects Society) Family Resource Centre 221-8799. Swimming, ice skate loan for Olympic Plaza skating, camping, parenting class Nobody's Perfect, Cooking Club -collective kitchen and other activities as funds allow. In order to participate persons must be registered with the Family Resource Centre.

**Muttart Public Art Gallery**, offers some very low cost art activities usually related to various exhibitions. Family Days are art related programs that happen ten times a year, they are free to members or a dollar per person for non-members. Contact the Muttart Gallery at 266-2764 and ask for a brochure on dates of art programs.

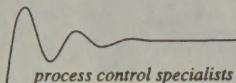
**The YMCA and YWCA** have subsidized memberships and programs for people who wish to apply. They also have summer camps with subsidy available. To get further details and application call the YMCA at 237-9622 or YWCA at 263-1550.

**Calgary Public Library** has a number of free or low cost events at each library throughout the city. Each branch has a booklet outlining the various activities at each location. Most programs are for preschool to 12 year-old children with some adult programs. Call the main branch or local library in your area for more information. ❖

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## WORDS ON THE STREET

## The Man

by Paula Stein

He was not old, although it was hard to determine his age because of the woolen stocking cap that was pulled low over his eyes. He stood in a small circle of light, a shelter from the night around him, that marked the entrance of the local IGA. His breath steamed in the frigid air as he walked back and forth rubbing his hands together and beating his arms against the sides of his body. His short, dirty, nylon ski jacket seemed hardly any protection from the cold, but the cigarette he pulled at must have afforded him some comfort. The official tag he displayed on his jacket marked him as a man without work, selling newspapers as a job more dignified than begging, less hazardous than stealing. A man with an intimate knowledge of poverty. The deeply creased face spoke of a tough life and trouble, but the spidery lines at the corners of his clear brown eyes whispered humour. Close-up, he was not old. He would be considered quite handsome in a business suit and without the scruffy stubble. A guy trying to get by in a world that has little use for him.

With a steaming mug of coffee balanced grudgingly on the edge of a newspaper vending box, he fumbled into a backpack at his feet drawing out an armful of **Our Voice** magazines.

A little rush of several customers entered and exited the IGA. Pushing back his cap, magazines in hand, he greeted them kindly and with a smile. "Good evening, madam, how are you tonight? Sir, how are you?" The eyes of the passers-by averted quickly and found something of infinite importance at their feet, or down the street, or over to their right or left. "Have a nice evening. Stay warm, now, it's a big cold out there tonight."

People rushed by in a hurry to reach their cars, in a hurry to distance themselves from his poverty as though it were contagious. Most of the people did not want to hear him. Some stammered an embarrassed and abbreviated greeting. No one met the eyes of the man with the papers. No money was drawn out of pockets or purses. No sales were made.

When he was alone, the man sipped his coffee thoughtfully and dragged on his cigarette, sending little "O" rings into the winter air. He swam back and forth through the light, shuffling the papers, his life a tableau, a negative advertisement. In another moment a flurry of people rushed along with the gently swirling snowflakes at the store's entrance. The man stood patiently, and as before greeted the air. And as before was quickly left alone with his magazines.

Disappointment must have been a demon kept at bay. His shoulders never slouched, his chin never fell. He deflected their rejection by pulling up the collar of his jacket and quietly sipping from his mug. Strange, this man with his life on display, yet so invisible; greeting no one in the night at the entrance to the IGA. ♦

BY FRAN MARIN

**I**s it that Child Welfare has too much power or is it that they are not accountable to anyone? I once believed that when children were removed from their homes it was due to physical or sexual abuse and that mere poverty wasn't sufficient cause.

I fed my kids, clothed them, sent them to school and my oldest had the best medical attention to her special needs that I could get. We had a roof over our head in a house full of love built on a solid Christian foundation. I was not an alcoholic or a dope addict. But the enormous stress of legal hassles with the children's "deadbeat dad" and surviving the two major surgeries that my oldest daughter had just been through left me feeling drained and overwhelmed. If there was ever a time that a single mother needed support it was then. Instead of giving me support Child Welfare took my kids. A temporary guardianship order was granted. For six months I tried to jump through the Child Welfare hoops to get my children back. Then two weeks before they were supposed to be returned to me in the court order, Child Welfare sought a permanent guardianship order with adoption.

Child Welfare placed discriminating labels on me. I was labeled as having a mental illness by the department. I questioned my worker on how I could be labeled without undergoing any psychological or psychiatric testing. I believed if a person was diagnosed as having any medical condition it would have to be done by a qualified medical professional, not a Child Welfare worker. My worker told me that I needed to prove to the department that they were wrong and I was a responsible parent in sound mental health. I asked, "You lay these charges on me, what happened to innocent till proven guilty?"

Like many single moms I needed to supplement my income with help from Social Services. I also worked by delivering flyers from three different companies and catering when work came up. I needed to find work that fitted around my children's school and medical appoint-



## Losing my children A mother's side of the story

ments, of which there were many. My oldest daughter has a hypothyroid problem, kidney reflux, and heart murmurs. The two surgeries she had in one month corrected the kidney and heart problem, and she is healthier today. I wasn't a "lazy couch potato mom." I worked hard and went begging for clothing and food donations when necessary. I don't drink. I am not a dope addict. I didn't beat or neglect my kids. We got into this situation because of poverty and a father who would not support his children.

Along my journey to get my kids back I discovered a few other scary facts. Legally the medical profession can ignore pleas for assistance, direction and guidelines. Can you imagine a doctor telling you that you have diabetes and not prescribing insulin? The psychologists kept telling me that I needed to reduce the stress at home. When I asked how, they ignored me.

Did you know that if you need the kids' dad to help out with clothing or school bills, something totally for the children's benefit, that it is wrong to ask him to give anything? I didn't, and that's how Child Welfare stayed involved with us until the kids were stopped from coming home from school one day.

I don't have the strength to take on this alone. How many more innocent children will be ripped from loving innocent parents just because their sins are trying to make it under the poverty jumping stick that is whacking us over the head?

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This is clearly only one side of the story, the mother's side. We have printed it as is to allow Fran Marin to have a voice, her voice on her story.*

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## Talking Back

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### SHOWING BACKBONE

I've been buying your magazine for quite a while now. I want to compliment you folks on your hard work and good effort.

I used to be very offended at people panhandling and always asking for change. I really feel good about seeing these people trying to sell the magazine and doing something about their lives. I'm never bothered by a person showing me a magazine. A magazine is to me a very good alternative to people on the street begging for money. It shows they have initiative and backbone and good will towards society. Please keep up your good work. I enjoy your magazine even if I don't always agree with it.

**Pastor Gord Hostetter**

### BULLYING VENDORS

Always contributed to the people who are holding these voice papers. Today I gave a guy a dollar, a loonie, he grabbed the loonie and held the paper and told me there was a minimum donation of \$2. If this is what you want for your paper, you better take it off that it's a donation paper. This is the last time I will be donating to the people. He has really hurt your cause.

**Buying the magazine a year from now?**

Yes, I shall still buy your magazine in a year and beyond. Why? For people like John Gray who, so I hope, will write again. Also because of a certain Mr Klein, who, so

I also hope most sincerely, will NOT be voted into another office again. With my best wishes to your cause...

**Dolores Soldt**

### THANKS FOR CASWELL MEMORIAM

I would like to thank you for publishing a memorial to George Caswell in your January issue, as I had been concerned about his disappearance.

I had been purchasing **Our Voice** from him for about one year. During that time he was always pleasant, often much more than clerks in stores where I purchased more costly items.

Through meeting him I began to wonder where he and others on the lower level of the income scale stayed at night, and whether they were able to make enough to afford the right kind of food. I was relieved to read in your memorial that he had a good friend in George Stefanuk.

Last summer George was in good spirits, smiling if you stopped to talk to him, often joking about the weather or what was going on at the Stampede. In the fall he became sad and seldom smiled. In early December I bought a paper from him and received no response at all. After that I walked by more frequently to see how he was doing, but never saw him again.

Now I feel frustrated about George's last few months. They likely weren't as pleasant as they could have been. I believe societies will ultimately be judged by the way we treat those who are most helpless. Right now ours would not fare very well.

**Karl Miller, Calgary.**

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IN THE HEART OF STRATHCONA

# WHY A STRIKE?

**Jeff and Roger talk about why they are on a picket line.**

**J**ust tell them it's not about the money." The woman on the picket line at Safeway is very clear about her message. "I'm happy with my pay, I want the hours," she says. Like many employees at Safeway she works less than 20 hours a week, and even if she is getting \$11 an hour, it's not enough to live on.

"It's tough, tough on your family life," reports Roger, who's worked for Safeway for the past two years. Like many people on the picket line, Safeway isn't his only job. Roger says he has two other part-time jobs. "Sometimes I work 15 hours a day." He has two kids, a mortgage and his wife got laid off two years ago. "She's an R.N. (Registered Nurse) and she's started her own business, trying to get that going. There's no work out there."

Roger lost his steady job four years ago, and it took two years before he got the spot at Safeway, and he's still there as a "courtesy clerk", the bottom of the staff totem pole. Roger isn't that young a man anymore, his greying hair and salt and pepper mustache show it.

He was getting shifts of no more than 5 hours a day at Safeway. It just wasn't enough work to be a full-time job, to make a living. He'd go from the store to a second job, and sometimes to a third one.

Jeff is a young man and has already worked at Safeway for nine years. He was working there before the pay cuts of recent years. He's getting \$16 an hour and isn't complaining about it. But Jeff only has limited hours too, it's not a full time job for him either and he works another job as well.

Melissa was getting \$6.80 an hour and only four hours a week. She's a student and it is a part-time job for her. But during the summer "it's not enough for us," she says, and she looks for other jobs too. Calculating quickly she figured there had been 12 people working as much as she did or less.

"They keep hiring more and more people to keep the hours down. They spread it out to low-salary people," says Roger.

The company isn't obliged to pay for benefits for part-time people, and the wage scales are based on the number of hours you work. After so many hours there's a raise, but it can take a



long time to get there at 5 hours a week.

These people hope to be on the picket line only a few more days or weeks. "Back by the May long-weekend," Jeff says. But they have no illusions. "We are only about 4 percent in all of Safeway." And they are ready to stick it out. "I'm never going back in until there's a contract signed." For them it's not just about money. It's about a job, a steady job and not having to scramble every week to run more jobs and more hours. "Give us a few more hours so we can survive without working so many jobs." "I don't want my kids to have to work for \$6 an hour."

— Keith Wiley

## Our children's future?

**T**eenagers and young adults are out on the streets begging, "panning" they call it, more and more. These are young people facing challenges that at least a couple of generations before them haven't had to deal with. Their parents and grand parents took "opportunity" for granted. There was always the sense that you could go out in the world and make something for yourself. Now some young people are on the street asking the passers-by "can you spare 11 cents?"

They are just lazy, some may say, they are spoiled and not ready to work for their livelihood. Sure there was opportunity for people before, but you had to work for it, it didn't just fall in your lap.

True, but is that still always the case? Are the chances to work and get ahead really there for young people today? Every job has ten applicants, they all tell you that.

Not all of these kids have to be out there on the street. But many of them don't have a lot of choices. They can't afford to go to school, and can't get a job. They are facing some tough times and the ones you see panhandling are those who are coping, doing something about it. Worry more about others you don't see on the street. They are the ones at risk of losing spirit.

— Keith Wiley



Andy Phillips May '97

# NATIONAL DAY

## First Nations protest Indian Act

Story and photos by Michael Walters

**T**he sun was bright, the wind was fierce, and the mountains were glorious. A group of First Nations people stood on an overpass that crossed above the TransCanada Highway on the Morley Reserve between Calgary and Banff. They were laughing, yelling and taking an enthusiastic part in the National Day of Action.

Down the road on both sides of the highway, a large number of young people stood side by side, and passed yellow pieces of paper into the windows of passing cars that had been slowed and funnelled into a single lane on the busy four lane highway.

The leaflets, and the Day of Action, were in opposition to Bill C-79, an amendment to the Indian Act that is currently in the process of being passed in Parliament. According to the flyer, eighty-five percent of Indian people in Canada reject Bill C-79. The concern is that the federal government won't respond to Native opposition, or suggested alternatives.

Tony Snow is a twenty eight year old masters student at the University of Calgary. He explained how Bill C-79 over-rides the constitutional rights that native people have. Currently they work on a nation-to-nation structure with the federal government. The passing of the bill would turn the reserves into municipalities, and the land titles would be transferred to free land holders. He explained how this would allow outside interests to come in and aquire what little land the natives have left. Native communities own less than one percent of the land in Canada.

"Essentially they want to classify us like everyone else, but not treat us like everyone else. We need to recognize that we're different. You're different from me and always will be. We just have to learn to live together. You can't make people the same. This isn't a missionary cause. Government and society are trying

to impose their values on native people and indoctrinate us into their way of thinking. Then we'll be like them. Things don't work that way."

Tony believes that what needs to happen most importantly, is a change in the way of thinking. "People are continually modifying their identities. They say they are Canadian because they are this, or they do that, as though these rules uphold some kind of standard. They don't. You're an Indian so you have these rights. I don't think things are getting any better."

"When the treaties were first signed, it was all done by the white man on paper. We didn't understand their language. They couldn't understand us. Indian men at that time only made agreements verbally. These were honest and strong. Today this means nothing," says Frank Powderface, an eighty-six year old man.

Frank understands the difference between his people and the people who arrived on the continent some three hundred years ago. "Native people never felt they owned the land. We respected it greatly and shared it with the animals, and the creator. The Europeans thrived on ownership and posession. Our opposing philosophies worked in their favor."

This day of protest is out of the ordinary for the First Nation people but, Frank said, they have no other choice. The federal government won't listen.

"They've never looked at us like adults. They see us as savages who can offer no help to ourselves or the the problem. But we *can* help ourselves. We have educated leaders trying to work efficiently with the government, but time and time again they turn a deaf ear."

"The Indian way of life means great respect. Trying to help each other, not trying to outdo and deceive each other." ♦

# Y OF ACTION

## ct changes



TOP: Chief Henry Holloway of the Chiniki Band. LEFT: Eighty-six year-old Frank Powderface. RIGHT: The TransCanada Highway.

## What do we have to do to be heard?

The National Day of Action was declared by the Assembly of First Nations to protest the major changes to the Indian Act, Bill C-79. Chief John Snow of the GoodStoney/Wesley Band read a statement that said: "Bill C-79 is being rammed through Parliament when 85 percent of First Nations reject it."

"How can the government create legislation for First Nations and about First Nations without our direct input, without our direction. We reject this process, it is not democracy, this is oppressive, colonial style government."

"One year ago, the Royal Commission tabled its Report on Aboriginal Peoples, which outlines the concerns and issues of Canada's First Nations. We cannot even get a meeting with the federal government to discuss this report. This is unacceptable.

Canada is our family. We are equal partners in the social and economic future of Canada. As a troubled marriage cannot grow without the consultation of both partners, Canada cannot grow without the consultation of First Nations.

What do we have to do to be heard?" ♦

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## **WORDS ON THE STREET**

### **Painful story of abuse still remembered**

If I wanted to I could write a whole book about all the incidents that have occurred in my life. However, there is one type of incident that sticks out much more than most of the others. It is a period of sexual abuse which lasted for about three weeks at about 20 minutes a day.

This was a pretty serious violation, done by a fellow classmate in a school I attended long ago. Even though he was a minor, he committed an indecent act toward a defenceless victim, me.

It shouldn't surprise you that one male has been sexually abused by another. These things happen quite often, but no one is brave enough to come forward. I will be no exception.

I will call this horrible assailant "Ivan". If he is reading this article, Ivan will know who he is.

I was in Grade 6 and Ivan was in my class. He was big for his age. In fact Ivan was the biggest in the class. No one would mess with him, the consequences could be disastrous. He was a bully who had control over his classmates, including me.

One time in April I was playing in the schoolyard. Ivan came after me for something. There was a menacing grin on his face, and I was afraid. He pushed me to the ground. Then came the worst part. Ivan began rubbing his shoe against my crotch. I yelled at him to stop. "Do you like it? Do you like it?" he said.

He attacked me every day for nearly three weeks. I finally became brave enough to report this horrible incident. The first person I told was our teacher and in an instant Ivan was pulled aside.

I walked away thinking something would be done. However, nothing was done and this still surprises me. I still wonder why.

We can't sweep our problems under the rug any longer. The truth must be exposed. People need to be screened before they are allowed to work in certain environments.

I'm sure incidents like this have happened before to others. If we use caution they won't happen again. I wonder if Ivan is in prison right now.

**by Daniel Bishop**

### **Living in the inner city**

Some people have it so rough, but when I see them I am happy. I have a roof over my head and I am surrounded by the love of my loved ones. The people I see have no one. The pain and hurt shows in their eyes, almost to the point that you can feel it. Maybe that's why they turn to drinking Big

Bears, sniffing glue and working the streets. They think they are killing the pain. In fact, they are only hurting themselves and are not even aware of it. It hurts to see people trying to sleep at a drop in during the day because they haven't had enough sleep the night before. I would like to thank the Bissell Centre and other drop-ins for allowing people the opportunity to eat and shower. It is obvious that people feel safe at these places.

by Darlene

## From Coffee Cup to Canada Place

How many remember The Coffee Cup, the greasy spoon restaurant that used to be on the corner of 97 Street and Jasper Avenue in Edmonton? It got torn down long ago along with a block of Chinese restaurants. Then several years ago the city pushed it over and built Canada Place a big new building with government offices.

Just as several years ago people used to beg for help and money... now things have changed. Now people can sell the Our Voice magazine, which used to be Spare Change newspaper.

Times and buildings change. People and places change. Perhaps other people can change their attitude for street people - they need your support. God Bless!

by Terry Smith

## Life as a child of poverty

I was born October 13, 1968, in a hospital in Flin Flon, Manitoba. With a total of 5 brothers and sisters, the family structure was not even close to being strong, as welfare cheques were the means of financing. Alcoholism ran strong in both parents with arguing and torment being the only tongue they could resort to. The fight for food becomes very critical as our mouths were empty. The washroom facilities were outhouses that were so full the roof had to be cut open, then it became totally full.

I was physically abused up until the age of one and a half. My right hand was stepped on — the fingernail remains bent. I was placed on a wood burning stove on the right arm which left a mark on the elbow and top of the wrist. Then I got smashed over the head with a beer bottle above the left eye. I didn't stand a chance.

The main reason why this occurred was because my real parents didn't have sense enough to raise children. The drinking went on until my mom passed away, when I was two. I don't know exactly what the cause of death was. My father lived on in the poverty stricken home. He lost us all in 1970.

I was adopted into a Polish family and given the opportunity of getting an education, and making something out of my life with the closeness of friends all the way. Right from the day I graduated from high school I knew that if children were in store for me this kind of abuse could not be passed on from generation to generation.

by James Charles

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**T**he smell of nutmeg, ginger and cinnamon washed me back into childhood - wet head pressed into Mom's lap, towel rough from drying on the clothesline, rubbing my clean soft hair. "No child of mine goes to bed with a wet head." The cookie smell intermingled in my memory with wet scrubbed floors and shoe polish - shoes ready for Sunday School in the morning.

I squeeze through the door which catches on the hooked rug. "Step inside, step inside - don't let the cold air in." She is tall and thin with bony elbows and crepe neck, an apron like Grandma's, leftover remnants put to work.

"Is this the doll hospital?" I ask tentatively. In the phone book, the listing meant business: The Doll Hospital. My experience in the city leads me to believe it would be unwise to walk into an unknown house. This tiny house with its shaky, once-white fence; this lady wiping flour from hand to apron - this is a business?

The real customer, Donna, hangs in my hand. The black mat of her wool hair is rising slightly from her scalp. Her trunk is intact but her arms and legs are missing. She has been loved to death. It's her sweet smile which has caused her resurrection. Red, shiny and incredibly sweet, smiling through time at Mom, at me and soon at my daughter.

I have watched my daughter play. We have written to Santa Claus and we have browsed the toy stores. What is her heart's desire, the perfect Christmas present? A television advertised doll will not satisfy me, the giver. I still believe that if I try hard enough, I can create a perfect Christmas, be the perfect mother, raise the perfect daughter. Will my daughter love Donna too, or would Barbie be the doll of choice?

I hold the doll out to the doll lady. Can she be made whole again? The hands which accept her begin to probe and turn and measure. The raised blue veins look as if they may burst. Brown age spots dot the translucent skin - but those fingers! What have they done in their seventy plus years to look so capable, so sure?

She rummages through a box. "I've just got these little hands. I've found a new supplier in the States. I can make new arms from this cotton - see how close the colour matches the body? I think these hands are just the right size. Now what do you think about the feet?

In her mind the doll is whole, one more problem solved. "It may be a couple of weeks," she apologizes. "I get so much work before Christmas." We look at the jobs.

"These fifties dolls," she says, "I don't enjoy them. Filled with wiring to make them walk and talk. Poorly made - the wires inside are always broken. They need soldering and rewiring..."

I see a union award hanging on the wall - lifelong honorary mem-

bership in the aeronautical workers' union. "How did you learn to do all these things?" I ask, being the ultimate course-taker myself. I imagine years of continuing education courses to learn painting, sewing, knitting, wiring, soldering, etcetera before I could even contemplate fixing one doll.

"I was a riveter during the war," she says matter-of-factly. "In aircraft maintenance you pick up lots of handy tricks." She gestures toward the award - thirty-five years of service - "union, you know," she says, half-apologetically, "but I never went on strike."

Now we have affirmative action and mentoring programs and inclusive language policies to encourage women in non-traditional fields. A war did it for her and then, lacking a husband, her career was chosen.

In a retirement empty of children and grandchildren, she has the dolls. "Now this one," she indicates an ancient bear, "has a vocabulary of 400 words." She pulls the string cleverly hidden in the back of his neck. "How are you today," it crackles. "Fine," replies the doll lady, "and you?" "Fine, thank you," it responds, "Will you teach me to dance?" "Sure," she laughs and scoops him up for a quick twirl around the room.

"A little fellow was here one day with his mother, she adds, "and when Bear and I had a conversation, he clutched his mother's leg and asked to go wait in the car! I never meant to scare him." She is still concerned she may have caused fear.

The tiny house is filled with dolls, a row along the back of the couch, shelves on the walls, tiny dolls in the corner curio, on the table, on the floor. She opens the door to an unheated back bedroom to show me "an original Shirley Temple."

There on the bed is a doll like Arla had - a doll I had envied and longed for. Well out of my parents' price range or sense of what a little girl should receive for a gift. But Arla had an aunt in New York and always lorded her New York presents over us. Creamy skin and shiny, auburn hair with beautiful ringlets and a tartan ribbon to match her tartan kilt with a miniature pin holding it closed. A lace collar and cuffs on her white blouse. Daintily painted eye lashes, amber eyes, tiny freckles sprinkled across her nose. Little curving fingers with baby dimples on the backs of her hands.

"I'm trying to make her walk again," the doll lady explains softly, "for a woman who lost her daughter. She found this doll in a second hand shop and says she looks just like her daughter did."

I don't speak. My throat is constricted and my heart aches for that unknown mother trying to find a substitute that will never be found. I look at Sara Jane, doll doctor, healer, gently rocking the damaged doll. It's hearts she repairs, and hopes and memories, healing through dolls and love. ♦

*Sara Coumantarakis is our first winner in the Our Voice Stuart McLean Story Contest. The contest is for stories written in the spirit of Stuart McLean whose tales of everyday life on CBC Radio's Morningside became much beloved by Canadians. Sara won a copy of McLean's delightful book, *The Vinyl Cafe*.*

# POETRY

## Untitled

I lived under a bridge and on the street.  
Endured the cold and the sweltering heat.  
Went without food for many a day.  
Even the lowly horse has his daily hay.

My clothes were old, ill fitting, tattered and t.  
There were times I wished I wasn't born.  
My old runners looked like sandals.  
When I got a good pair, they were taken by vandals.

My soul had more holes than my sock.  
My pillow at night was usually a hard rock.  
For my shelter I had used cardboard.  
Why did you put me in this spot dear lord?

Got real thin and sickly looking.  
For me things just weren't cooking.  
Avoided family and my only friend.  
I was rapidly coming to my wits' end.

One day concluded that things couldn't be worse.  
Unless my next ride was in the back of a hearse.  
Decided to climb out of the hole I was in.  
I wasn't living, only existing, that was a great sin.

Changed from having a pessimistic to an optimistic attitude.  
No more people to me being rude.  
I found a nice place to reside.  
Soon had my new friends by my side.

Got a good job that pays me well.  
Can forget about the past life in hell.  
Met a lovely lady to further brighten my life.  
Soon we will become man and wife.

It goes to show when you're down and out.  
Have confidence in yourself, and get rid of doubt.  
When your only luck is all bad,  
keep up your chin and don't be sad.

**by Cecil Garfin**

*This poem was the winner in the "Looking Back on Sadness" category at last January's Songs of the Street Poetry Contest sponsored by Our Voice.*

**Our Voice** welcomes your poetry. Keep your own copy, as we cannot return submissions. Poetry editor: Michael Waiters.



## What Do You See?

What do you see  
when you look at me?  
Do you see the desire  
to be something to aspire?  
Do you see the hurts and joys  
of living two scores?  
Do you see the smile, true or  
fake,  
and wonder what it would  
take?

What do you see when a  
vendor  
is along your way?  
Do you just pass and wonder  
and wait till another day?

What do you see  
when you look at me?  
Do you see the stressed  
labourer,  
worried about union warrior?  
Do you see the hurts and joys  
of living some scores?  
Do you see the pout, being  
wore out,  
and empathize with what it's  
about?

What do you see when I pass,  
vendor,  
along my weary way?  
Will you notice and wonder  
when I've not passed today?

**by Louise Hellyer  
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# New Views of History

## Loyal till Death: Indians and the North-West Rebellion

Book Review by LeAnn Brown

**Fifth House Publishers 1997**

**Loyal till Death: Indians and the North-West Rebellion**  
by Blair Stonechild and Bill Waiser

*Accusations of treason, secret government agendas, a country's first mass execution, murder, hostages, and puppet courtroom theatrics—no, this isn't John Grisham's latest thriller—it's a new non-fiction account of the Indians' role in Riel's North-West Rebellion. That's right—Canadian history!*

**Loyal till Death: Indians and the North-West Rebellion**, written by Blair Stonechild and Bill Waiser, is an interesting mix of oral and written history, of cultural misunderstandings, willful discrimination, outright hatred and paternalistic righteousness. It's a case of Murphy's Law in action: if it could go wrong it did, if it didn't "naturally" go wrong, government agents forced it to go wrong. The bungling, due to cultural misunderstandings and badly trained interpreters, is eclipsed by the Canadian government's willful and knowing convictions of innocent men, the starvation of First Nations peoples, and the propagation of mistrust between two cultures. The official story is that many Indian bands joined Louis Riel in his rebellion against the Canadian government. For their acts of treason, Indians were convicted and hanged, and those that survived were punished by government policies and their race was besmirched by the brand of treason. Stonechild and Waiser, disturbed by the inconsistencies of the official history and the one-sided telling of the tale, chose to investigate what happened. The end result is a comprehensive account of the events leading up to the Rebellion, the role of Indians in the uprising, and the outcome of the rebellion. The Canadian government's willingness to discredit the First Nations' peoples and to decapitate a growing and powerful Indian rights movement is a key to understanding what really happened.

To get the full story on the Indian role in Riel's rebellion, Stonechild and Waiser approached First Nations elders through traditional protocol. Working with researchers known on the

reserves, traditional gifts of tobacco and blankets were made and the elders were asked for historical, not sacred, information. This opportunity was welcomed and the elders agreed to speak out, many for the first time. This oral history was recorded in Cree or Dakota and then the information was translated into English, for inclusion in the book and to compare to the written records of the time. The reliability of oral history proved itself to Waiser when an account of the Frog Lake killings was taken down in 1920 and the orator's grandson, gave a virtually identical account in the 1990's. Historic papers including diaries and court testimony were compared to the oral history. This weaving of two types of historical accounts (written and verbal), reinforces the validity of the authors' claims that there was no massive Indian support given to Riel and that bands who were travelling with Riel were there under threat of death.

What the book also illustrates is that the Canadian government used the Rebellion for its own gain. Tired of spending money on Indian rations, and not wanting to have to deal with the *Indian Problem* they used the Rebellion to create the illusion that Indians were active Rebellion accomplices to bring in new and harsh policies.

"Canadian authorities keenly appreciated that Riel's activities had handed them a club, and they were determined to use it to beat into the ground—once and forever—all remaining vestiges of Indian autonomy."

From the senior Indian Affairs official, John A. Macdonald, down to reserve farm instructors, the Indian Affairs policies were based on the belief that "The executions of the Indians [for their role in the North-West Rebellion]...ought to convince the Red Man that the White Man governs." - John A. Macdonald, 20 November 1885.

A result of this deliberate lie is a false legacy of treason that still stigmatizes First Nations people. One hope in this revisiting the past is to put to right the story, to re-examine the conviction



Blair Stonechild and Bill Waiser, the researchers and authors of *Loyal till Death*

PHOTO: Gordon DesBrisay



Our Voice

## New Views of History

of such leaders as Big Bear and Poundmaker, and to clear the name of First Nations peoples. Through evidence found in John A. Macdonald's own papers, Stonechild and Waiser show that the government was clearly not ready to honour its treaty obligations, while the Cree "...instead of blindly lashing out against the government and its empty promises...were determined to bring about change by peaceful means. They had solemnly pledged in the presence of the Creator to honour their treaty pledge and remain loyal to the Queen. And they were not prepared to break their vow and plunge the region into war, even if Ottawa was violating both the spirit and the terms of the agreement with such horrendous consequences. The Cree hoped to force Canadian officials to revise the treaty so that it provided more adequate support and assistance."

In an attempt to rebalance history, Stonechild and Waiser commissioned illustrations to portray the other side of the story. These illustrations and the many photographs capture the isolation, the despair and the cultural differences that led up to the Rebellion and the government's use of the Rebellion to create new and harsh policies to punish and control First Nations peoples. ♦

*Special thanks to Marilyn Wood Publicity and Bollum's Books for the arrangements made to interview Bill Waiser.*

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## WORDS ON THE STREET

### We Exist

By Rob McCaghren Jr.

**W**e exist, out there, standing on the street corners,

feeling the cold, burrowing deeper into our jackets to keep warm, waiting in line at the local cafes, in anticipation of the coffee or hot chocolate that will warm us for a while. Like you, we feel the rumble in our bellies that signals the onset of another noonhour. We, like you, sleep when we are tired. And, like you, we need shelter from the winter to survive. Survive. Seems like a bit of an extreme expression, doesn't it? When you live on the streets, survive isn't just a word or a random grouping of letters, it's a way of life. Survival is a day-to-day achievement.

Don't get me wrong, I realize that you and many others have worked for everything you've got, but what if tomorrow something happened to you that left you penniless and destitute? Would you shrink into the shadows and cease to exist? My guess is that you would do whatever it took for you to get back on your feet and make a living.

We are not asking for a handout, or a free ride. Some people might be, but most of us are not. Most of us simply desire a chance. I have lived on the streets off and on for five or six years. I have seen a vast amount of wasted talent. Not

because anyone was lazy or shiftless, but because society can't or won't see through the dirty faces or ratty clothes to the living, breathing, human being underneath.

I have met people who were successful businessmen and are now sleeping on mats on dirty floors of overcrowded drop-in centres. They don't even have a blanket to cover themselves while they sleep. They have pride. Pride which can be destroyed when forced to eat at one of the over utilized soup kitchens, like the Mustard Seed Church.

I am one of the lucky ones. I have family that care about me. I have a way out, if I try. But I don't forget the people who are still out there, trying to survive. They are still my friends, and even when they had little, they knew I had none, and they still helped me. And I know things could change in a moment, and I won't forget where I've been or where I came from.

So next time you pass one of us on the street, don't ignore us. Even if you simply stop to say hello. It can brighten our day, and yours too.

However, there are still good times, with laughter and stories of small successes, large to some, small to most. There are friends, street "families", and things that make people happy to be alive. It's just that they are different from what you might be accustomed to. ♦

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## NEWS OF THE WORLD

Plums away, small fruits and big bangs

It's all been going massively wrong with plums. In Romania, an old woman died when flames from her plum-still ignited a buried artillery shell. "We always said her plum brandy blew your head off," said one neighbour. Equally explosive were events in La Plata, Argentina, where a single plum wreaked more havoc than any individual item of fruit has ever done before. Trouble started when the plum's owner discovered it was rotten, and duly jettisoned it from the bus on which he was travelling. The discarded fruit was mistaken for a "hand-grenade or something" by the driver of the car behind, who swerved to avoid it. This in turn forced the driver behind him to swerve, which in turn forced a six-ton truck to smash into a camping emporium where it hit a display of butane canisters. The latter exploded, destroying the shop and injuring 93 people. "Thank God it wasn't a watermelon," said one official, "Or the whole country could have been destroyed."

## A holiday visit to the Turkish loo

Hotels have been treating their guests particularly badly of late. In Brighton, England a guest house was fined 7,500 pounds for accidentally serving a guest cleaning fluid instead of the water she'd asked for. Even more unfortunate were the experiences of widow Vera Puffle, 73, who spent the first day of her holiday in Turkey cleaning lavatories. On arrival at her hotel, in Mersin, Mrs Puffle had made her way to reception, en route picking up a toilet brush she found lying on the foyer floor. "I told the receptionist I was Mrs Puffle, from Ashby-De-La-Zouche," she recalled, "And gave him the toilet brush. But he gave it back and told me to do the downstairs loos. He was very insistent and I didn't like to say no." She duly did as she was asked, scrubbing for three hours before reporting back to reception, whereupon she was castigated for taking so long and sent into the restaurant to serve dinner to her fellow holiday makers. Only when she asked if she might see her bedroom did staff realise Mrs Puffle was actually a guest rather than the trainee maid they'd imagined. "I've seen *Midnight Express*," she explained. "You don't want to argue with these people."

## Mustard on the brain, in the face

It's been a week of mixed fortunes for mustard. New research has suggested that eating it regularly can boost brain capacity. Too much, however, can be a bad thing, as discovered by Chicago burglar Jake 'The Snake' McPeas after he got wedged in a large pot of the stuff. Mr McPeas, 36, nicknamed 'The Snake' because of his propensity for wriggling through narrow spaces, was slithering into a house through the pantry window when he lost his grip and fell headfirst into a large jar of extra-thick Dijon. "It had grease paper over the top," he explained, "And my head just went right in and got stuck. It was like being in a diving helmet full of slime." A frantic Mr McPeas stumbled around the pantry head butting the walls in an effort to break the jar, but all to no avail, and it was only when the house-owners, alerted by the noise, smashed the pot with a hammer that he was able to breath again. "He's lucky it wasn't my chilli-fire chutney," opined householder Megan Rimmer. "People have fainted just from smelling that."

Articles compiled by Paul Sussman in **The Big Issue**, London, England's street-sold magazine.

Story and Photos by LeAnn Brown

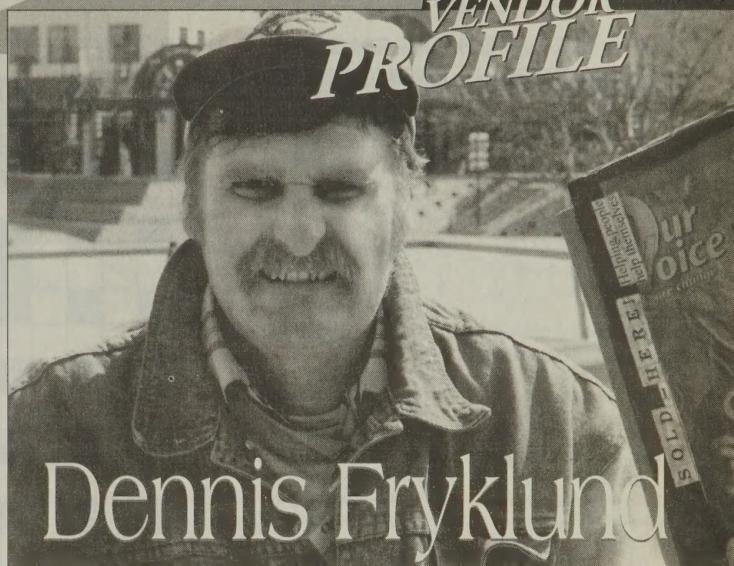
At over 6'4", Dennis is **Our Voice**'s Gentle Giant. Soft-spoken and big, Dennis is a gentle man with a ready smile and a quiet nature. He's one of **Our Voice**'s longest full-time vendors, having sold the paper for 3 years. Originally from Moose Jaw, he lived in Regina for 10 years doing different jobs, including cleaning and general labour. His sister, Wendy, suggested he move out to Calgary where prospects were better. In 1981 he came to Calgary.

Selling **Our Voice** has helped Dennis learn to manage his bills, and keep track of day to day expenses and needs. He also has to decide how many papers to buy, as well as make decisions as to where and when to sell. "You're depending on other people to buy your paper, and that means you need patience," he says. Another positive part of selling the paper is the strong friendships he has developed with other vendors. "We keep each other going. When you get down, someone else says, 'Don't give up!' and you do the same when they're down."

Dennis became a vendor almost by accident. At Connection Housing he saw a notice on the bulletin board that asked the question, "Why ask for spare change when you can sell it?" That question intrigued him and soon he was signed up as a vendor. He'd been working as a casual janitor before that and he found that selling the paper worked better for him, as he could set his own hours and make the money when he needed it most.

"If it weren't for **Our Voice**, I'd probably be on Cash Corner, hoping to get a job." He receives an income from Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (A.I.S.H.), but that only covers some of the basics. The income he earns from vending goes towards filling the gap and small luxuries like

## VENDOR PROFILE

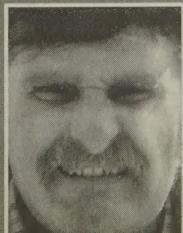


coffee.

Due to their dedication and hard work, he and fellow vendor, Rob Champion, have been given the "zone rights" to sell the magazine both in downtown Calgary and Kensington. What's most interesting for Dennis is meeting people. He has regular customers in both areas. "Kensington is a good place to sell. It's more relaxed. Downtown everyone's in too much of a rush," he explains. He's so much part of the Kensington community that two of the businesses he works near provide the occasional coffee and sometimes some lunch. Selling the paper has shown him how important it is to be polite and pleasant, "Even if they don't buy a paper, you say, 'Have a good day.'"

At 49 years of age, and having sold the paper for 3 years, he's looking for a change, "I want to see about delivering flyers but still sell **Our Voice**." Right now he's living day by day. When sales are up he's up, but when sales are down, "you might as well push me down on a toboggan." After such a cold winter, Dennis is appreciating the sunshine and all the people the warm weather brings out.

**Our Voice**  
Authorized Vendor



V  
E  
N  
D  
O  
R

Vendor Name \_\_\_\_\_

Number \_\_\_\_\_

Authorized by \_\_\_\_\_

### OUR VOICE VENDOR'S CODE

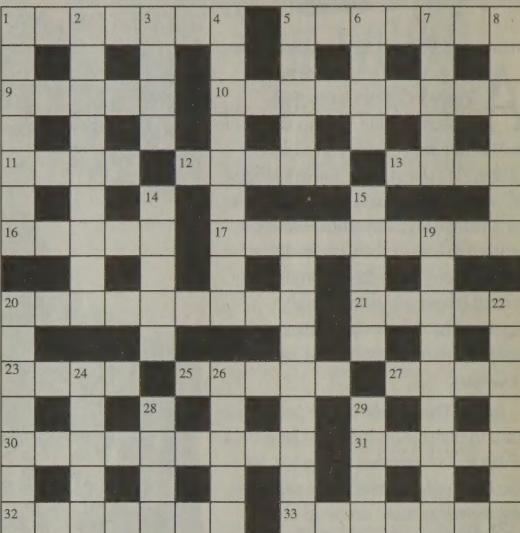
- I will be sober at all times while working
- I will be polite to all members of the public
- I will vend only in areas that are authorized

## #49 BY SUSAN ANDREWS

**A C R O S S**

**D O W N**

- Decorative pattern, or an edible mollusc (7)
- Peregrine, prairie, gyr (7)
- Ceremonies (5)
- Significance (9)
- Kenneth Branagh's ex-wife: \_\_\_ Thomson (4)
- Fergie, Randy \_\_\_' ex-wife (5)
- Not busy (4)
- Crazy like a squirrel? (5)
- Lily-like flower with a very long stem (9)
- Softest, most yielding (9)
- Finished, over and done with (5)
- A sort of file or hoarse voice? (4)
- Canadian rocker Bryan (5)
- Line of light or a rafter? (4)
- Gas-filled tube that emits coloured rays (4,5)
- To deprive of a man (5)
- Tilda Swinton's androgynous character (7)
- Dogs - or long sharp teeth (7)
- Someone you give permission to cut you open (7)
- A robot or similar stiff human character (9)
- To thpeak with one of thethe (4)
- DNA can be used to confirm claims of this (9)
- A female horse under 4 years of age (5)
- To exist - or bad backwards? (4)
- Possessed (5)
- Currency mentioned in the Bible (7)
- Binary digit made of bits (5)
- Large walls designed to keep out water (5)
- Someone with an inherited respiratory disorder (9)
- What Casanova was (6,3)
- The Centre Of The Universe - or so say its residents (7)
- Firm requests, sometimes outrageous (7)
- Round object onto which thread is wound (5)
- British slang: to lay low (5)
- A Scottish group of families (4)
- Och aye, a Scottish brook - ouch, that's hot! (4)



### Answers to April Crossword #48

Puzzle #49  
answers will be  
published in the  
May issue of  
Our Voice.



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D  
E  
R  
E  
K  
S  
  
WORLD

LISTEN TO THIS DEREK.  
A WOMAN AT FIFTY-FIVE  
HAS A ONE IN THIRTY-THREE  
CHANCE OF GETTING BREAST  
CANCER! THAT'S INCREDIBLE!

YUP BOB, AN' WHAT'S MORE  
INCREDIBLE IS THAT WHERE  
MOST FUNDS SHOULD BE  
GOING TO BREAST CANCER  
RESEARCH, IT'S INSTEAD GOING  
TO OTHER PREVENTABLE  
AND LESS COMMON DISEASES.

ALLOWING ONCE AGAIN,  
THE WOMEN OF THE WORLD,  
WHO HOLD FIFTY-ONE  
PERCENT OF THE POPULATION,  
TO REMAIN OPPRESSED,  
HUMILIATED, INFRINGED UPON



..TRAMPLED ON!  
AAHH!!  
STOMPED ON!  
OUCH!



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